



<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/letters/bal-ed.le.09apr09,1,5214382.story?coll=bal-opinion-letters>

## Letters to the Editor

April 9, 2005

### **Health care cuts are cruel blow to immigrants**

Jose Antonio Gutierrez came to America from Guatemala for the same reasons that many of our ancestors came: to make a better life for himself. Originally an undocumented immigrant, Mr. Gutierrez successfully navigated the immigration process, adjusted his immigration status and received a green card.

He loved his adopted country, and signed up to serve his adopted nation as a U.S. Marine, even though he was not yet a U.S. citizen. In March 2003, he became one of the first U.S. fatalities in the Iraq war. He received his U.S. citizenship posthumously.

Legal immigrants pay millions in taxes. They enrich our communities through their hard work, civic participation and entrepreneurial spirit.

They often work in low-wage jobs that others are unwilling to perform. They serve in the U.S. armed forces, and have done so with distinction since the Revolutionary War.

Sometimes legal immigrants such as Mr. Gutierrez make the ultimate sacrifice for our country, even though it is not yet their country.

Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. has a plan to reward legal immigrants for their immense contributions to our country and our community. His proposed budget for the coming fiscal year kicks all legal immigrants off the Medicaid rolls.

About 4,000 people - many of whom are pregnant women and children, and all of whom are legally in the United States - would become uninsured under Mr. Ehrlich's plan.

These parents are working low-wage jobs that do not provide health insurance but are essential to our economy. They are playing by the rules. They are law-abiding. They have no margin for error in their lives.

In many cases, they are not yet citizens because of the backlog in processing their applications and because they often are required to wait a number of years after becoming a legal immigrant to apply for U.S. citizenship.

In Maryland, the governor wields enormous authority over the operating budget. The General Assembly is very limited in its ability to restore cuts proposed by the governor.

There is \$1 billion in Maryland's rainy day fund. Restoring these cuts would cost about \$7 million.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/letters/bal-ed.le.09apr09,1,4064697.print.stor...> 4/11/2005

Budgets are moral documents, and these cuts reflect a clear abdication of moral responsibility to assist our most vulnerable residents.

The money is there, and the ball is squarely in the governor's court on this issue.

*Thomas E. Perez*  
*Rockville*

The writer is president of the Montgomery County Council.

### **Preserve funding for early education**

Reading the editorial "Pay for preschool" (March 28) and the article "Coalition's goal is raising readiness for kindergarten" (March 29), I was reminded how difficult these 90 days of the year when the legislature is in session can be.

To learn that the House and Senate are considering cuts to preschool programs is quite troubling.

We are all familiar with campaign slogans and speeches citing commitments to improve and increase funding for education. But at times, elected officials need to be reminded of these priorities.

There is much data and national research that clearly tie early intervention and direct instruction to improved outcomes for our youngest students.

Everything is measured, collected and reported in a manner that is crystal clear and then, boom - the budget quagmire begins and waters get muddied.

Despite past efforts, Maryland ranks 42nd in education spending. Only 55 percent of children entering kindergarten last year were considered fully ready by the Maryland State Department of Education.

And until Maryland bridges the gap in learning for minority children and those with special needs, our state will continue to see many of these children entering school unprepared to learn.

As we wind down this legislative session, it is time to ask, once again, that the needs of our children come to the forefront.

*Jeff Rives*  
*Elkridge*

### **Use open space funds to save open spaces**

To me, Maryland offers some of the most beautiful and diverse scenery in the nation. Many surveys show that open space and recreational opportunities constitute some of the primary reasons people want to live in this area.

To ensure that this quality of life remains available as growth is accommodated, Program Open Space was developed in 1969.

Under that program, homebuyers have been paying half of 1 percent of their home's value to the state to